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Subject: RE: staffing: 12/12 Remarks on War on Terror #5
Sent: Fri, 9 Dec 2005 17:38:48 -0500
[PhiladelphiaWorldAffairs12December2005#5.doc](#)

Marc,

Attached are my comments in the tracked document. As I said before, I really like the speech - there is much much good in it. There are some thing we should address, which I think are critical to make the speech as effective and complete as it can be, and I have geared my comments in that direction. My edits seek to:

- To make sure the chronology and developments are described accurately (I am impressed with how well you did here, given the twists and turns of the process! In most cases, my changes are needed however to make it fully accurate)
- To explain the logic of our political strategy and how it relates to beating the terrorists and insurgents: keeping momentum by keeping to the deadlines to demonstrate to rejectionist that there is no return to the old days, while at the same time extending a hand to the Sunnis at every step of the way. This combination of two factors has been key to using the political process to undermine the insurgency -- as well as building a democratic Iraq. (Here it is so important to tie these things together - the establishment of democracy and winning the war, as many Americans probably don't care if Iraq is democratic in itself).
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- To give the listener as sense of what lies ahead in 2006 - what happens after the election? What should Americans expect?
 - • To acknowledge that the Sunnis are still problematic - that most voted against the constitution at the polls, etc
 - • To shift the tone of the part on the region, which I found a little too aggressive given that many of the Arabs are now stepping up to the plate, at least partially. And to add one para on the broader international engagement.
- And finally, a few places to suggest cuts!

Happy to help further in any way. I am excited about this speech!

Meghan

Remarks on the War on Terror
Monday, December 12, 2005
Draft #5

Thank you all for that warm welcome. And thank you, [XX], for that introduction – and for the invitation to come to Philadelphia. I appreciate the chance to get out of the City of Brotherly Strife, and spend some time in the City of Brotherly Love. Since 1949, the Philadelphia World Affairs Council has provided an important forum for debate and discussion on vital issues of the day. And I have come to discuss an issue that is vital to the safety and security of all Americans: Victory in Iraq.

Earlier this month, my Administration released a document called the “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq” – and in recent weeks I have been discussing various elements of our strategy with the American people. At the U.S. Naval Academy, I spoke about our efforts to defeat the terrorists and train Iraqi Security Forces so they can provide for the safety of their own citizens. Last week at the Council on Foreign Relations, I discussed how we are working with Iraqi forces and Iraq’s leaders to improve security ... help Iraqis rebuild their cities ... and help the national government in Baghdad revitalize Iraq’s infrastructure and economy. Today, I want to speak in depth about another vital element of our strategy: Our efforts to help the Iraqi people build a lasting democracy in the heart of the Middle East. And I can think of no better place to discuss the rise of a free Iraq than in the heart of Philadelphia – the city where America’s democracy was born.

Acknowledgments

- [TK]

A few blocks from here stands Independence Hall – where our Declaration of Independence was written and our Constitution was debated. From the perspective of more than two centuries, the success of America’s democratic experiment seems almost inevitable. At the time, however, that success did not seem so obvious or assured.

The years following the American Revolution were a time of chaos and confusion. There were uprisings, such as Shays' Rebellion, with mobs attacking courthouses and government buildings. There was a planned coup – the Newburgh conspiracy – that was diffused only by the personal

intervention of General Washington. In 1783, Congress was chased from this city by angry veterans demanding back pay – and Congress stayed on the run for six months. There was rampant inflation caused by the lack of a stable currency. There were regional tensions between the mercantile North and the agrarian South that threatened to break apart our young republic. There was violence and crime and a lack of an organized police force. And there were supporters of the former regime who had to be reconciled to America's new democracy.

Our Founders faced many difficult challenges. They made mistakes, learned from their experiences, and adjusted their approach. Our Nation's first effort at a governing charter, the Articles of Confederation, failed. It took many years of debate, discussion, and compromise before we finally ratified our Constitution and inaugurated our first president. And it took a four-year civil war, and a century of struggle after that, before the promise of our Declaration was extended to all Americans.

It is worth keeping this history in mind as we look at the progress of freedom and democracy in Iraq. No nation in history has made the transition from tyranny to a free society without facing challenges, setbacks, and false starts. The past two and a half years have been a period of difficult struggle in Iraq – yet they have also been a time of great hope and achievement for the Iraqi people.

Two and a half years ago, Iraq was in the grip of a cruel dictator who defied the world, threatened his neighbors, harbored terrorists, and murdered innocent men, women, and children. Since then, the Iraqi people have assumed full sovereignty of their country ... held free elections ... drafted a democratic Constitution ... and approved that constitution in a nationwide referendum. Three days from now, they will go to polls for the third time this year, to choose a new government to serve a four-year term under Iraq's new democratic constitution. This is a remarkable transformation for a country that has virtually no experience with democracy – and which is struggling to overcome the legacy of one of the worst tyrannies the world has known. Iraqis have accomplished all this in just a few years – and they have done it under fire, while determined enemies sowed violence and destruction and actively worked to stop their progress. There is still much difficult work to be done in Iraq. But thanks to the courage of the Iraqi people, the year 2005 will be recorded as a turning

point in the history of Iraq ... the history of the Middle East ... and the history of freedom.

As the Iraqi people struggle to build their democracy, their adversaries continue their war on a free Iraq. The enemy is a combination of rejectionists, Saddamists, and terrorists. The rejectionists are ordinary Iraqis, mostly Sunni Arabs, who miss the privileged status they had under the regime of Saddam Hussein – and they reject an Iraq in which they are no longer the dominant group. As we help Iraqis build a strong democracy, we believe that, over time, most of this group will be persuaded to support a democratic Iraq led by a federal government that is strong enough to protect minority rights. The Saddamists are former regime loyalists who harbor dreams of returning to power – and they are trying to foment anti-democratic sentiment among the larger Sunni community. Yet they lack popular support – and over time, they can be marginalized and defeated by the people and security forces of a free Iraq. The terrorists are the smallest but most lethal group. Many are foreigners coming to fight freedom's progress in Iraq. They are led by a brutal terrorist named Zarqawi – al-Qaida's chief of operations in Iraq – who has pledged his allegiance to Osama bin Laden. The terrorists' stated objective is to drive U.S. and Coalition forces out of Iraq and gain control of the country. They would then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and try to establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain.

The terrorists in Iraq share the same ideology as the terrorists who struck the United States on September 11 ... blew up commuters in London and Madrid ... murdered tourists in Bali ... killed workers in Riyadh ... and slaughtered guests at a wedding in Amman, Jordan. This is an enemy without conscience – and they cannot be appeased. If we were not fighting and destroying this enemy in Iraq, they would not be leading quiet lives as good citizens. They would be plotting and killing our citizens – across the world and within our own borders. By fighting the terrorists in Iraq, we are confronting a direct threat to the American people – and we will not rest until this enemy is defeated.

We are pursuing a comprehensive strategy to defeat these enemies and aid the rise of a free Iraq – and that strategy has three elements: On the economic side, we are helping the Iraqis rebuild their infrastructure ... reform their economy ... and build the prosperity that will give all Iraqis a

stake in a free and peaceful Iraq. On the security side, coalition and Iraqi security forces are on the offense against the enemy. We are clearing out areas controlled by the terrorists and Saddam loyalists ... leaving Iraqi forces to hold territory taken from the enemy ... and following up with targeted reconstruction to help Iraqis rebuild their lives. And as we fight these enemies, we are working to build capable and effective Iraqi security forces, so they can take the lead in the fight – and eventually take responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens without major foreign assistance. As Iraqi forces become more capable, they are taking responsibility for more and more Iraqi territory, and we are transferring bases to their control. That means American and Coalition forces can concentrate on training Iraqis – and hunting down high-value targets like the terrorist Zarqawi and his associates.

Today, I want to discuss the third element of our strategy: Our efforts to help the Iraqis build inclusive democratic institutions that will protect the interests of all the Iraqi people. We are working with the Iraqis to engage those who can be persuaded to join the new Iraq ... to isolate those who never will ... and to help the Iraqi people build the institutions of a free and representative government – and the international support they need to succeed. By helping Iraqis build an inclusive democracy, we help undermine the insurgency by winning over those who doubted they had a place in the new Iraq. By helping Iraqis continue to build their democracy, we will gain an ally in the war on terror. By helping Iraqis build a democracy, we will inspire reformers across the Middle East. And by helping Iraqis build a democracy, we will make the American people more secure.

From the outset, our efforts in Iraq have been guided by a clear principle: Democracy takes different forms in different cultures – yet in all cultures, successful free societies are built on certain common foundations: Freedom of speech, so citizens can debate and discuss public issues free from fear and retribution ... freedom of assembly, so citizens can organize to challenge their leaders and press for reform ... a free economy to create prosperity and opportunity and economic independence from the state ... an independent judiciary to guarantee rule of law and assure impartial justice ... and freedom of worship – because respect for the beliefs of others is the only way to build a society where compassion and tolerance prevail. Societies that lay these foundations not only survive, but thrive –

while societies that do not lay these foundations risk backsliding into tyranny.

When our Coalition arrived in Iraq, we found a nation where almost none of these basic foundations existed. Decades of brutal rule by Saddam Hussein had destroyed the fabric of Iraqi civil society. Under Saddam, Iraq was a country where dissent was crushed ... a centralized economy enriched a dictator instead of the people ... secret courts meted out repression instead of justice ... and Shia Muslims and other groups were brutally suppressed by the ruling Sunni minority. And when Saddam Hussein's regime fled Baghdad, they left behind a country with no civic institutions in place to hold Iraqi society together. The crumbling of these institutions was more intense and widespread than we had originally anticipated.

To fill the vacuum in the early months after liberation, we established the Coalition Provisional Authority. The CPA was ably led by Ambassador Jerry Bremer – and many fine men and women from almost every department of our government volunteered to serve in the CPA. They did an amazing job under extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances – helping to restore basic services ... making sure the food distribution system continued to function ... and getting abandoned and ransacked government ministries up and running again.

The CPA's most important task was bringing the Iraqi people into the decision-making process of their government, most for the first time in their lives. In July 2003, the CPA, with the help of United Nations under Sergio de Mello and the Iraqis with whom CPA had forged relationships before and after the war, established an Iraqi Governing Council. The Governing Council was a diverse group of leaders: from Islamists to Communists, from Sunnis and Christians, to Shiites, Turcomen, and Kurds. For the first time, Iraqis had a voice in their own affairs. But this unelected body, which was subordinate to the CPA, did not satisfy the hunger of Iraqis for self-government. Like free people everywhere, Iraqis wanted to be led by Iraqis they elect – not foreign officials. And each day the CPA held power, it created a sense of occupation instead of liberation. Our initial plan for the post-Saddam period involved a significant period during which CPA would govern Iraq. Under this plan, the CPA would continue to administer Iraq and help Iraqis restore the institutions that had been wrecked by Saddam Hussein....while appointed Iraqi leaders drafted a constitution and

then held elections to choose a new government. Only when a constitutional, elected government took office would the CPA hand sovereignty over to Iraqis – and go out of business. This plan was similar to models that have worked effectively in other post-conflict transitional environments, and many thought it would suit Iraq.

But it did not. This initial plan met with widespread disapproval in Iraq – especially by the millions of Shi'a and Kurds who had been starved of freedom for so long. . The Iraqis made clear to us that they wanted a Constitution that was written by the elected leaders of a free Iraq – and they wanted sovereignty placed in Iraqi hands sooner. We listened – and adjusted our approach. In November, we negotiated a new framework with the Iraqi Governing Council. This plan called for an accelerated transition to Iraqi self-government. Under this new plan, the Governing Council would establish the Transitional Administrative Law (or TAL) that guaranteed personal freedoms unprecedented in the Arab world, and set the foundation for a handover of governing authority from the CPA to an interim Iraqi government by July 2004.

The TAL was a significant milestone in Iraq's transition from dictatorship to democracy. But its significance goes well beyond the document itself. For the first time, Iraqi leaders from all major factions engaged in the give and take of politics. A general consensus was reached on issues at the core of Iraqi society: the role of Islam in the state, the division of power between the federal government and local governments, and reconciliation procedures to address past wrongs, to name a few such issues. The TAL also structured and designed a political process that would encourage all sides overtime to join the political debate and share in Iraq's democratic gains ... through checks and balances ... power sharing mechanisms ... and deliberately flexible procedures. This process has played itself out over the past year and a half ... with impressive results.

The TAL laid out four major benchmarks to guide Iraq's transition to a constitutional democracy:

The first benchmark was the handover of full governing authority to an Iraqi interim government in June 2004, for the occupation to end, and for the CPA to dissolve. The second was for Iraqis to hold free elections to choose a transitional government by January 2005. The third was for

Iraqis to adopt a democratic constitution – which would be drafted no later than August and put before the Iraqi people in a nationwide referendum to be held no later than October. The fourth was for Iraqis to choose a permanent government under that democratic constitution – with elections held by December 2005.

The transfer of sovereignty took place two days ahead of schedule – and since the moment they took control of their own destiny, the Iraqi people have hit every deadline. Along virtually every step in this process, there have been calls from within and without Iraq to delay or postpone these deadlines. Some people insisted that more time was needed to get the Sunnis – who had not yet accepted the new state -- on board. Rather than choosing to delay the process, we and the Iraqi government chose a different approach. First, together, we insisted on having the deadlines met. This was to keep momentum and to prove to those who resisted the change from a Ba'athist state that the new Iraq was inevitable. Yet at the same time, at every opportunity, we and the Iraqis opened the process and urged Sunnis to join politics. This was key to signaling to them that, while there would be no return to Saddam's days, there was a place for them in today's Iraq. In sum, we kept the political train moving, but ensured that there was always a hand out to the Sunnis inviting them to jump on board.

And this strategy has worked.

In January 2005, Iraqis hit the first benchmark when they went to the polls and chose their leaders in free elections. Eight and a half million Iraqis defied the car bombers and assassins to cast their ballots – and the world watched in awe as jubilant Iraqis danced in the streets, held up ink-stained fingers, and celebrated their freedom.

The January elections were a watershed event for Iraq and the Middle East – yet they were not without flaws. The key flaw was the decision by the vast majority of Sunni Arabs to boycott the vote. As a result, there were only 17 Sunnis in an Assembly of 275. But Shia and Kurdish leaders who had won power at the polls saw that for a free and unified Iraq to succeed, they needed to share that power with Sunni Arabs who had boycotted the elections. So Iraq's elected leaders reached out to Sunni leaders – and brought them into the governing process. When the Transitional Government was seated, Sunni Arabs were given important

posts – including Vice President, Minister of Defense, and President of the National Assembly.

The new government's main challenge was to meet the second benchmark – adopting a democratic constitution. Again, Iraq's leaders reached out to Sunni Arabs who had boycotted the elections and included them in the drafting process. Fifteen Sunni Arab negotiators, and ten Sunni Arab advisors joined the work of the constitutional drafting Committee. Together, representatives of all of Iraq's diverse communities debated state-defining issues. And the result was a bold constitution that guarantees to all Iraqis the basic freedoms of mankind.... freedom of speech ... freedom of the press ... freedom of assembly ... freedom of religious belief and practice ... equal justice under law ... property rights ... and women's rights...and the right to vote.

Yet for all the progress they made, negotiators could not agree on a handful of issues important to Sunni Arabs – and many Sunnis in the constitutional committee did not support the final draft. Four days before the referendum, however, some Sunni leaders struck a historic deal. Several of their demands were met, including a new procedure that will allow the next elected assembly to amend the constitution. . The revised constitution was endorsed by major a Sunni party – and overwhelmingly approved in a referendum that drew over a million new voters to the polls. Many have noted that Sunnis still voted against the constitution. This is true. But more importantly, Sunnis voted in huge numbers for the first time, and even those parties that opposed the constitution, mobilized their constituency to participate in a peaceful political dialogue – and prepared for the vote in December. Iraqis in all parts of the country, of all groups and interests, were now fully engaged in the political process.

And that leads to the events of this week. On Thursday, Iraqis will meet the fourth benchmark in their democratic transition – when they go to the polls for the third time this year and choose a government to serve a full four-year term under their new constitution. –. Despite terrorist violence, the country is buzzing with the sights and sounds of democracy in action. The streets of Baghdad, Najaf, Mosul, and other cities are full of signs and posters. The television and radio air waves are thick with political ads and commentary. Over three hundred parties and coalitions, including more

than 7000 candidates, have registered for this week's elections – and they are campaigning vigorously. Candidates are holding rallies and debates ... laying out their agendas ... leveling charges and counter-charges ... and asking for the vote. Our troops see Iraq's vital young democracy up close – and they are inspired by what they see. First Lieutenant Frank Shirley of Rock Hall, Maryland, says this about the campaign season in Iraq: "It's cool riding around Baghdad and seeing the posters – it reminds me of being home during election time. After so many years of being told what to do, having a real vote is different. We should stay the course and finish it out. I have no problem coming back another time."

Unlike the January elections, Sunnis are campaigning vigorously for office this time around. At least two major Sunni coalitions have registered to compete in this week's vote – including many Sunni parties that opposed the Constitution. Other Sunni leaders have joined national coalitions that cross religious, ethnic, and sectarian boundaries – running on issues instead of identity. As one Sunni politician puts it, this election "is a vote for Iraq, not for sects. We want a national Iraq, not a sectarian one." (great quote, although I don't believe it is representative at all)

To encourage Sunni participation, the National Assembly made important changes in Iraq's electoral laws that will increase Sunni representation in the new assembly. Before Iraq was one giant electoral district. As a result, the number of seats a group had in the Assembly corresponded closely to the turnout of that group – and because few Sunnis voted, their communities were left with little representation (17 out of 275!). Now, Iraq has an electoral system where seats in the assembly are allocated by province, , much like members of our House of Representatives are elected by states. . This system ensures that Sunnis will be well represented in the next Assembly, regardless of whether terrorists and insurgents intimidate people into staying away from the polls in Sunni areas.

But Sunnis today have no intention of sitting this election out. More and more Sunnis – encouraged by the efforts to bring them in and the influence that the new Assembly will have in defining the new Iraqi state – see that they can advance their interests through politics, not violence.

A leading Sunni who had opposed the political process and boycotted the January vote puts it this way: "The country needs Sunnis to join politics.

The Sunnis are now ready to participate.” A Sunni sheik in Diyala Province explains why Sunnis must participate this way: “In order to not be marginalized, we need power in the National Assembly.” As more Sunnis join the political process, the Saddamists and rejectionists are the ones being marginalized. As more Sunnis join the political process, they are ensuring the interests of their community are protected. And as more Sunnis join the political process, they are teaching their fellow citizens an important lesson: Sovereignty, free elections, and majority rule are only the beginnings of freedom. The promise of democracy is fulfilled by minority rights, and equal justice, and an inclusive society in which every person belongs. (I switched the order of these paragraphs)

Today, many Sunnis are campaigning for office at the risk of their lives. The Iraqi Islamic Party – a major Sunni party that boycotted the January vote – has seen its offices in Fallujah and Ramadi attacked. And the head of the party reports that at least ten members have been killed since they announced they would field candidates in Thursday’s elections. Recently a top Sunni electoral official named Izzadin al-Muhammadi visited the Sunni stronghold of Baquba to encourage local leaders to participate. As he traveled to his meeting, a roadside bomb went off. The explosion rattled his convoy, but failed to stop it. He says this about the attempt on his life: “The bomb is nothing compared to what we are doing. What we are doing is bigger than the bomb.”

By pressing forward and hitting every benchmark, the Iraq people have built momentum for freedom and democracy and at the same time have created space and incentives for those outside the process to join in. At every stage in the process, the enemy has tried to stop Iraqis from taking the next step on the road to democracy – and at every stage, Iraqis sent a clear message to the terrorists and Saddamists: The Iraqi people want to live in freedom. By meeting their deadlines, Iraqis are defeating a brutal enemy ... rejecting a murderous ideology ... and choosing freedom over terror. Despite the costs, the pain, and the danger, Iraqis are moving forward with courage. They are securing freedom to their people ... bringing pride to their nation ... and they are earning the respect of the world.

This week’s elections will not be perfect – and Iraqis are not the end of the process. The real work of building a strong democracy begins after

the polls are closed and the votes are been counted -- and Iraqis still have more difficult work ahead.

One challenge is building national institutions and encouraging a political climate centered on issues, rather than identity. This coming Wednesday will be historic for the Iraqi people and the greater Middle East. But the political process will not end on Thursday. In January, the 275 Iraqis elected to the new parliament will come to Baghdad, select a Prime Minister, Presidency Council, and Cabinet. Two thirds of them must agree on the top leadership posts ... a requirement that will require consensus-building ... intense negotiation ... and patience. Later next year, Iraqi leaders will work to amend the constitution and ensure that the document is a true national compact among elected leaders from all constituencies. In the fall, there will be another nationwide referendum to ratify or reject these amendments. All of these procedures are important to the future of Iraq ... and to making the political process more inclusive. The process will be difficult ... and challenging ... but as we have done since Saddam's fall, we will work with Iraqi leaders, the United Nations, and other partners, to assist the Iraqis as they continue to build an enduring and stable democracy.

Another challenge is encouraging reconciliation and human rights in a society scarred by three decades of sectarian division and arbitrary violence. During the regime of Saddam Hussein, the Shia majority was brutally oppressed by the Sunni minority – and for some there is now a temptation to take justice into their own hands. Recently, U.S. troops raided an Interior Ministry building in the city of Jadriyah where they uncovered a secret prison, with more than 170 men, mostly Sunnis, some of whom appeared to have been beaten and tortured. To ensure peace and reconciliation, bad elements like those operating this facility in Jadriyah must be rooted out. And to ensure peace and reconciliation, we must help Iraqis build an impartial system of justice that protects all of Iraq's citizens – and holds even the highest ranking officials to account.

Last week, millions of Iraqis saw their independent judiciary in action, as their former dictator, Saddam Hussein, was put on trial in Baghdad. The man who once struck fear in the hearts of Iraqis was forced to sit and listen as his victims recounted the acts of torture and murder he ordered. One Iraqi watching the proceedings said this: "We all feel happiness about this

fair trial.” Another who survived the massacre for which Saddam is now being prosecuted puts it this way: “We want the deserved punishment for the guilty and fair treatment for those who will be found innocent, even if it were Saddam Hussein or his aides.” Slowly but surely, with the help of our Coalition, Iraqis are replacing the rule of fear with the rule of law – and in so doing, they are laying the foundations for a lasting free society. And as Iraqis see their former leaders held to account, they will gain confidence in the future – and will be able to put the past behind them.

Another challenge is encouraging even greater support from Iraq’s Arab neighbors and the international community in general. Most Arab nations were relieved when Saddam Hussein was removed from power – because it removed a grave threat to their countries. Yet the establishment of a constitutional democracy in their neighborhood has been an unsettling development for many. .

But more Arab states are beginning to recognize that a free Iraq is here to stay, and are starting to get off the fence and give Iraq’s new government more support. A majority of the Arab League’s 22 members maintain diplomatic missions in Baghdad; others are considering whether to send their ambassadors back. Recently, Saudi Arabia welcomed Prime Minister Ja’afari on an official state visit– as have Egypt and Jordan. Last month, the Arab League hosted a meeting in Cairo to promote national dialogue among Iraqis and another such meeting is being planned for next year in Baghdad. . These are important steps – and Iraq’s Arab neighbors need to do more. Arab leaders are beginning to recognize that the choice in Iraq is between democracy and terrorism – and there is no middle ground. The success of Iraqi democracy is in their vital interests – because the terrorists have made clear that if they prevail in Iraq, they will target Iraq’s Arab neighbors next.

Wider international support for Iraq is increasing too. The international community pledged over \$13 billion in assistance to Iraq over a period of three years at the Madrid Conference in 2003; over \$3 billion of this has been disbursed. The World Bank approved its first concessional loan to Iraq, worth \$100 million, last month. And the world is supporting Iraq in the fundamental challenge of building strong political institutions and fighting terrorism, too. The UN played a vital role in supporting Iraq’s elections last January and the Constitutional referendum in October, and was a key player in the constitutional negotiations as well. In June, the EU

and the co-hosted a conference for more than 80 countries and international organizations that pledged a renewed international partnership with Iraq to establish security, prosperity, and a successful political transition. All this is in addition to the more than 30 countries that have boots on the ground as part of the UN-mandated Coalition in Iraq.

(I would cut this for space. It is a very valid point, but if we keep it, we will have to do some sensitive crafting.)

As democracy takes hold in Iraq, people across the broader Middle East are drawing inspiration from Iraq's progress. When the new Iraqi government takes power in January, Iraq will become the first constitutional democracy in the Arab world – and this will have an impact that reaches far beyond Iraq's borders. As Iraqis begin to enjoy the better life that freedom brings, democratic reformers across the region will have a cause for hope – and an example to show their countrymen. A free and stable Middle East begins with a free and stable Iraq. And as hope and freedom spread across that region, the American people will be more secure.

As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the terrorists' most powerful myth is being destroyed. The whole world is seeing that the car bombers and assassins are not fighting a foreign occupation – they are fighting the will of the Iraqi people. In his 1998 fatwa, Osama bin Laden argued that the suffering of the Iraqi people was justification for his declaration of war on America. Now bin Laden and al-Qaida are the direct cause of the Iraqi people's suffering. It is al-Qaida that blew up mourners at a funeral inside an Iraqi mosque, and murdered Iraqi children and their parents at a toy give-away outside an Iraqi hospital. These terrorists are killing and maiming innocent Iraqis by the thousands – and after this week's vote, they will be fighting to overthrow a free and constitutional government chosen by the Iraqi people. It is becoming clear that the terrorists are not fighting on behalf of the Iraqi people – they are murdering innocent Muslims to serve their own will to power and their desire for dominion over others. And as more Muslims across the world see this, they are turning against the terrorists.

As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemy will continue to sow violence and death. Our Coalition faces ruthless adversaries in that country – men who celebrate murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power. These enemies will not give up because of a successful election –

they understand what is at stake in Iraq. They know that as democracy takes root in that country, their hateful ideology will suffer a devastating blow – and the Middle East will have a clear example of freedom and prosperity and hope. And when the hope of liberty spreads in the Middle East, the terrorists will begin to lose their sponsors ... lose their recruits ... and lose the sanctuaries they need to plan new attacks.

The terrorists will continue fighting freedom's progress with all the hateful determination they can muster – and they believe they can break our will and force us to retreat. In his recent letter to the terrorist Zarqawi in Iraq, the al-Qaida leader Zawahiri invokes Vietnam as a reason to believe the terrorists can prevail in Iraq. Zawahiri writes, quote: "The aftermath of the collapse of American power in Vietnam – and how they ran and left their agents – is noteworthy." End quote. Now some in Washington are likening Iraq to Vietnam – and they are proposing the same solution. These politicians need to explain to the American people how we will be safer by doing the one thing that al-Qaida hopes we will do.

Abandoning Iraq would not make Americans safer – it would put the American people at greater risk. It would send a signal across the world that America is a weak and an unreliable ally. It would send a signal to our enemies – that if they wait long enough, America will cut and run and abandon its friends. And it would vindicate the enemy's tactics of beheadings and suicide bombings and mass murder – and invite new attacks on America. So I make you this pledge: We will not endanger our own citizens by quitting before the job is done.

Most Americans want two things in Iraq: They want to see our troops win, and they want to see our troops come home as soon as possible. And those are my goals as well. To achieve victory, our military will continue to hunt down the enemy in Iraq – and prepare the Iraqi Security Forces to defend their own free nation. We will continue to help Iraqis rebuild their cities and lives so they can enjoy the prosperity that freedom brings. We will continue to stand with the Iraqi people as they move forward on the path to democracy. And when victory is achieved, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

Before victory comes, there will be more hard fighting and heartbreak. Yet we can have confidence in our cause, because the Iraqi people are determined – and our troops have the courage to see the

mission through.

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Like every American serving in Iraq,

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is fighting to defeat our enemy in Iraq so we do not have to face the enemy here at home. And our Nation will not rest until that enemy is defeated and we have achieved complete victory.

A free Iraq will not be a quiet Iraq – it will be a nation full of passionate debate, and vigorous political activity. It may well struggle with a certain amount of violence for years to come. But Iraqis are showing they have the patience and the courage to make democracy work. And Americans have the patience and courage to help them succeed. By helping Iraqis lay the foundations of a lasting democracy, we are adding to our own security -- and laying the foundations of peace for generations to come.

Not far from where we are gathered today is a symbol of freedom familiar to all Americans: the Liberty Bell. When the Declaration of Independence was first read in public, the Liberty Bell was sounded in celebration – and a witness said: “It rang as if it meant something.” Today, the bell of liberty tolls in Baghdad, Basra, and other Iraqi cities – and its sound is echoing across the broader Middle East. From Damascus to Tehran people hear it – and they know it means something. It means that the days of tyranny and terror are ending ... and a new day of hope and freedom is dawning.

Thank you. God bless you. And may God continue to bless and protect the United States of America.

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